

Herbarium

September 22 - October 28, 2018

Jenny Anderson, Laboratory for Aesthetics and Ecology, Johannes Heldén, Ingela Ihrman, Katarina Lundgren, Uriel Orlow, Luiza Prado and Tobias Sjöberg

The exhibition *Herbarium* collects and presents artwork that examines various medical traditions, future ecologies, bio theft and colonial resistance. The boundaries between the body's in- and outside and the human relation to nature are other subjects highlighted in the exhibition. The different artworks take us inside of the body, down into the earth, through the layers of time, across the boundaries of the geography and the body.

A great deal of pharmaceuticals has historically, and are still today, been extracted from molecules that plants produce or as that man synthesizes by copying the plants' chemistry. In the surroundings of Gnesta and Järna, alternative medicine traditions have a strong presence. Throughout history, fights between the Western medical establishment and alternative medical traditions have been taking place around the world, and also in this region. Uriel Orlow's film trilogy depicts the struggle between traditional medical practitioners in South Africa and the British colonial rule's view of medicine. Traditional medicine was the dominant medical system for millions of people in southern Africa. The films investigate ideological and commercial meetings between two different, yet overlapping medical traditions and their use of plants and colonial power's relentless demands for submission. The film trilogy describes the botanical world as a stage for world politics and capitalism. Inherited domestic knowledge is collected and used by researchers and multinational companies.

The resistance to colonialism reoccurs in the artist Luiza Prado's installation *The imaginary becomes complete on the margins of every new linear projection*. The peacock flower (*Caesalpinia Pulcherrima*) is commonly found along the rivers of Brazil and parts of the Caribbean. During the time when Brazil was colonized (1500-1815) many women were systematically raped in order to make the country "whiter". By brewing tea of the bark of the plant, the abused performed the abortion themselves. The work investigates a kind of radical care that occurs in societies during colonial oppression. The installation recreates the moment when the tea meets the saliva, a moment of resistance where new timelines can occur. This story was first recorded in the *Metamorphosis Insectorum Surinamensium* from 1705 by illustrator Maria Sibylla Merian (1647-1717) who lived in the Dutch colony in today's Brazil.

Artist Ingela Ihrman's *A Great Seaweed Day* is the start of a longer project that explores the encounter between the bacterial flora of the sea and the intestines, and how the stomach can be expanded and valued as high as the Earth's energy reserves. The project continues Ihrman's study of the body's inner sea and the outer sea that encloses both seaweed and algae as bathing people. Together with the herbarium, a video in which we can get below the surface to collect bowel duct (*Ulva Intestinalis*) and the local newspaper *Seaweedsbladet*, whose front is adorned by a dried copy of the brown algae chaser (*Chorda Filun*) from Margaret Gatty's (1809-1873) algae herbarium.

With varying blue tones, artist Jenny Anderson studies nature in an experimental graphical technique based on light sensitive iron salts. Her work explores the changing structures of the material, focusing on the knowledge about the healing ability of the plants in Chinese medicine. In Chinese medicine, treatments are made with different dried medicinal herbs. Their effect, beautiful shapes and surfaces after the drying process, fascinates Anderson. The herbs depicted are Gui Zhi, Gan Cao and Gao Liang Jiang. Here, nature meets the inside, and the inside reflects the outside.

For this exhibition, artist Tobias Sjöberg has worked with the windows in our grand hall. Sjöberg's artistic work often touches the boundary between perishability and persistence. The two paintings consist of three substances, the medical plant ring flower (*Calendula Officinalis*), eggs and honey. The two paintings relate to and are influenced by the conditions of its surroundings. During the exhibition they will change, the clear color changes and moves slowly towards a reddish-brown color.

The Herbarium's form, function and history is reflected upon by artist Katarina Lundgren in her filmical exploration of the Swedish Museum of Natural History Museum in Stockholm. At the Natural History Museum there are countless herbariums with millions of plants separated from their natural contexts, pressed, described and preserved between papyrus, parchment and cellulose sheets. Thus, a herbarium (*hortus siccus*) always consists of an act of translation which presupposes that the pressed is uprooted, dried and removed from its natural context. Perhaps this practice, to remove, circle and systematise can be perceived as a clear example of mans´ appropriating impulse to make the environment his own.

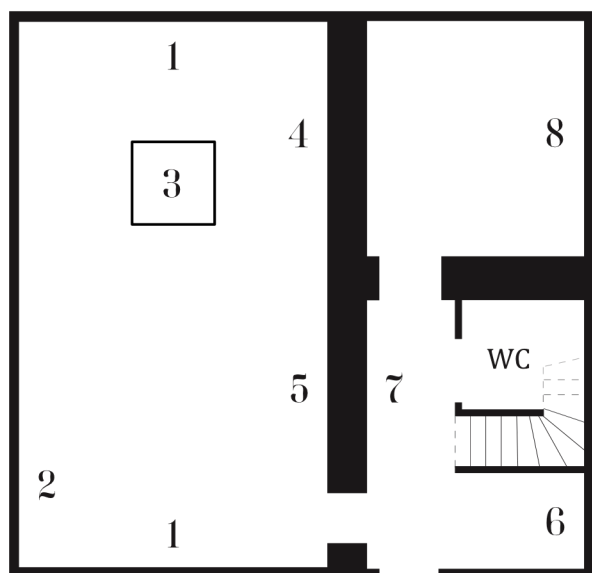
The interdisciplinary platform Laboratory for Aesthetics and Ecology presents *Libra-rium*, a library that continues to grow during the exhibition period. The library as a herbarium becomes a collection of restructured woods, a place for meetings between human and plant-based writing.

If several of the works in the exhibition relate to an ecology, nature and reality anchored in history or in our times. Johannes Heldén turns the gaze, through his text and soundworks *Field Guide to the future planet*, towards a time horizon beyond our own. Towards a future that gives other perspectives on the nature that human beings are so close to destroying. In the exhibition we meet 11 descriptions of species of plants from a future ecology. The philosopher Friedrich Schelling (1775-1854) wrote "[...] since man despised nature, she is a plant of worry, lacking her unity." Even though people have the difficulty to see anything but themselves, we have no choice but, as researcher Donna Haraway encourages us, cultivate our ability to respond, take responsibility and reinvent the conditions for a inter-speciel flowering.

Through the exhibition we ask: how can we consider plants not only as witnesses but agents in our various histories? As actors who combine perspectives and traditions that are otherwise kept separate. Actors who cross the boundaries between nature and culture, tradition and modernity, established as well as alternative medicine.

Herbarium is produced by Art Lab Gnesta and Grafikens Hus. The exhibition opens at Art Lab Gnesta on September 22 and runs until October 28. But like offshoots, the exhibition grows through lectures, performances, installations and workshops to Stockholm, Södertälje, Järna and Ytterjärna.

Curators: Sebastian Dahlqvist (Art Lab Gnesta) & Ulrika Flink (Grafikens Hus)



1. Tobias Sjögren
2. Jenny Anderson
3. Luiza Prado - *The imaginary becomes complete on the margins of every new linear projection.*
4. Johannes Heldén - *Field guide to future planet*
5. Ingela Ihrman - *A Great Seaweed Day*
6. Katarina Lundgren - *Herbaria*
7. Laboratory for Aesthetics and Ecology - *Libra-rium*
8. Uriel Orlow - *Muthi, 11 min*
- *The Crown Against Mafavuke, 18 min*
- *Imbizo Ka Mafavuke (Mafavuke's Tribunal), 28 min*

Exhibition group: Caroline Malmström, Peter Olsén, Erik Rören

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